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ABSTRACT

As a part of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, this document reported on the perceptions and attitudes of Indian students, parents, teachers, and community leaders toward Indian culture and its incorporation in the school curriculum in their respective communities. Attitudes were ascertained using various scales. Results indicated a general consensus among respondents that some aspects of tribal and/or Indian history and/or culture should be taught in the schools in some way. A majority of students and parents also expressed interest in making it possible for children to learn or use the tribal language in school. Indian parents in most communities agreed that their respective schools ignore the Indian or tribal heritage. Aside from these concerns, it was felt by the respondents that the role of the school is to prepare Indian students for employment in the dominant economy and for successful lives in the sociocultural mainstream. (EL)

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FINAL REPORT

Perceptions of Indian Education

Series IV

No. 10

Attitudes toward Indian Culture and Its Incorporation in the School Curriculum: Students, Parents, Teachers, and Community Leaders

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NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

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I. Community Backgrounds of Education in the Communities Which Have Been Studied.

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ATTITUDES TOWARD INDIAN CULTURE AND ITS INCORPORATION IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

This report is based on analysis of the data obtained from interviews, from the Semantic Differential used with students, and from several items on Teacher Questionnaire A.* These will be described below, as we examine the results on each one. All of the rating scales referred to in this section were 6 point scales, but all have been collapsed to 4 points as follows:

Points	Meaning	Value
1 and 2	Negative	1.5
3	Indifferent (dis-interested but not negative)	3.0
4 and 5	Mildly to fairly positive	4.5
6	Very positive	6.0

Students

Scale I: Attitude toward Tribal Culture.

An overwhelming majority--92 percent--indicated an interest in learning about their tribal culture or history. Only 6 percent indicated indifference. The majority of the interested students did not seem to have given this question

*This report is one of a series on the results of the rating scale analysis done using Student, Parent, Community Leader and Teacher Interviews recorded by personnel on the National Study of American Indian Education. The reader will understand what is discussed in this paper better if he is familiar with the other papers in Series IV of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, particularly numbers 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. Paper No. 1 lists the schools studied and some of their characteristics and the nature of the field research. Paper No. 7 includes examples of the interview schedules and rating scales utilized in the Study and describes how they were formulated and used. Papers No. 8 and No. 9 deal with the validity and reliability of the rating scales and interviews. Numbers 11 and 12 are based on the results of the rating scale and questionnaire analyses. Number 10 deals with the attitudes of Indians toward their culture. Number 11 reports on the evaluations Indians make of their schools. Number 12 discusses the attitudes of Indians toward formal education, of teachers toward Indians, and the communication and interaction between Indians and teachers.

a great deal of thought--it was not a "burning issue" for them. Whether or not many of these students had a great deal of interest in learning about science, history, English literature, or other aspects of the dominant culture we cannot say.

One important question remains unanswered, namely--what did these students understand by "tribal culture" when we asked about their interest in it? They may have understood this to mean traditional tribal (or stereotyped "Indian") culture (e.g. art, songs, dances, making clothes, canoes, or bows and arrows); they may have interpreted this as learning about their history; or they may not have had much idea of what we meant. It is doubtful that many of them were thinking of the contemporary culture and organization of their native communities.

Scale J: Attitude toward School's Relationship to Tribal Culture.

Two-thirds of the 1300 students rated on this scale were interested in learning about their tribal culture and/or history in school. Thirty percent, however, were rated at point 3. This is defined as follows:

> Respondent feels that the school should recognize the existence of the tribal culture and should do nothing to undermine it or its meaning to the members of the tribe attending the school. If he feels that it is important for himself or for other Indian children to learn about tribal or Indian culture, he would prefer that this be done at home.

The relevant question of the interview schedule was: "Would you like to learn more about_____ (e.g. "the Sioux")? In school or at home?" Almost all students rated at point 3 had replied "at home" to this question. This does not necessarily mean that they were against learning it in school; it just means that they prefer learning it at home. The two-thirds rated at points 4 and 5, on the other hand, indicated (1) that they would like to learn it either at home or at school, (2) that they would like to learn it both at home and at school, or (3) that they preferred learning it at school. Few students appeared to have given this possibility of revising the curriculum to include tribal history, culture, or language much thought, though there were some significant exceptions.

A breakdown of these results by schools suggests that, for the most part, students from the less acculturated areas are somewhat more interested in their native culture. According to the rating scales and the semantic differential, students in the Chicago schools, Pawnee, Ponca City, and Cut Bank appear to be least interested in this. Indians in all of these areas are quite acculturated and attend schools with a predominantly white student population. Based on the semantic differential results, students in Angoon, Bethel, Chemawa, Indian Oasis, Pima Central, Saint Joseph and Shonto were most interested in their tribal culture. With the exception of St. Joseph, students in these schools are relatively

unacculturated compared with our total sample of students.*

We must be somewhat cautious in making this generalization, however, for many relatively unacculturated students (e.g. those in Fort Thomas, Phoenix BIA schools, Browning schools) do not come out as particularly interested in their native culture on our instruments, while many relatively acculturated students (e.g. those in St. Joseph and Moclips) seem quite interested in it.

Scale F: Student's Attitude toward his Tribal Language.

Three-fourths of the students interviewed expressed an interest in learning or knowing their tribal language. Twenty percent were indifferent, and 4 percent felt that this was meaningless or silly or that it would interfere with learning "more important things." In most communities we studied, the majority of students do not speak their tribal language, though they may know a few words. (There are significant exceptions, of course, such as Shonto and Bethel). In very few cases did students indicate a really strong desire to speak or understand it. Only four students out of 1,200 rated indicated that they believed that knowledge of their native language was more important than knowledge of English.

It is noteworthy that interest in culture and history seems stronger than interest in the native language.

The breakdown of results on this scale by school is more difficult to understand than the data on attitudes toward tribal culture. Students in Angoon, Bethel, Browning, Moclips, Red Wing and St. Joseph expressed the most interest in learning or using their tribal language in school. About one half of the students in Bethel are fluent in their Eskimo language. Most students in Angoon, Browning, Moclips, Red Wing and St. Joseph do not speak their native language fluently, though the language is not completely lost in these areas. Many students who speak their language well (e.g. the majority of those in Chemawa, Cibecue, Indian Oasis, Flagstaff Dormitory, Fort Thomas, Pima Central, Shonto, Theodore Roosevelt and Tuba City) did not stand out on this scale as especially interested in their language. Students at the Phoenix Indian School, as well as the relatively acculturated students in Pawnee and Ponca City, were among the <u>least</u> interested.

We offer the following, admittedly tentative hypothesis for these results. The statement which was considered in rating this particular scale was the response to the question, "Would you like_____(language) taught in school?" Clearly, students who already spoke their language well would not be

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*Most of these students--those in Angoon, Bethel, Chemawa, Indian Oasis and Shonto--were also most positive in their attitudes toward the "White's Way of Life" on the semantic differential. Thus, their positive responses regarding their tribal culture may be more a function of a generally positive outlook or a tendency to accept rather than criticize things than they are a result of an unusually positive attitude toward their tribal culture.

interested in having it taught to them by teachers. One of the most important things for these students to learn in school is English. Even if they do not go very far in school, a knowledge of English is important to them and their families in order to be able to deal with teachers, BIA, school, welfare and other government officials, and employers. Thus, we would not expect them to respond positively to the questions asked, and as the results demonstrate, many (anywhere from one-fourth to two-thirds) did not.

Students who are somewhat familiar with their native language but not fluent in it, on the other hand, may be more interested in learning it in school. This would be the case for many students in Bethel and Browning and Red Wing. Finally, some students such as those in Angoon, Moclips and St. Joseph may simply be "turned on" in general to their Indian heritage, including the language, and many apparently would like to be able to speak it.

Parents

Scale V-A: Parent's Attitude toward Tribal Culture as Expressed in His Concern for his Child's Socialization in the Tribal Culture (Excluding Tribal Language).

The great majority of parents (88 percent) expressed concern that their children learn about their native culture. Six percent were indifferent, and 6 percent felt negatively about it. Very few parents indicated that they thought it was as important for their children to learn about their tribal culture as it was to prepare themselves for employment in the dominant society. The parents voicing the greatest concern that their children learn about their tribal culture were those of students in the Minneapolis schools. This is probably due to a rather militant Indian movement in this area which stresses the importance of the Indian heritage. Parents of students in Browning, St. Francis and Todd County were also quite concerned about this. It is not possible to give a general explanation of why these particular parents and not those who are at roughly equivalent positions on the acculturation continuum (e.g. those in Angoon, Bethel, Eagle Butte, Fort Thomas, Indian Oasis, Keshena, Laguna-Acoma, Neopit) seem more interested in their tribal cultures. One possibility is that raters in the Colorado center tended to rate too high on this. Another is that parents of students in Browning, St. Francis, and Todd County schools were, like the Minneapolis parents, affected by a local rise in Indian "consciousness." It is interesting that none of the relatively unacculturated groups of parents in the Southwest stand out as particularly "above average" on this scale. Perhaps they tend to take their culture and their children's knowledge of it for granted, and show somewhat less concern for their children's learning it than do parents in areas where the culture is in danger of being "lost" to the coming generations.

Parents in five schools stood out on this scale as least interested in having their children learn about the tribal culture, in comparison with other groups of parents. All of these parents were quite acculturated and had

considerable contact with non-Indians; they lived in Cut Bank, Hoopa, Pawnee, Ponca City, and Pembroke. However, other relatively acculturated parents (e.g. those of students in Keshena, Magnolia, Neah Bay, Neopit, Shawano and St. Joseph) were close to or even above the mean for the total sample on this item. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that even the least interested groups of parents were, on the whole, moderately concerned that their children learn something about their tribal culture.

Scale V-C: Parent's Attitudes Concerning the School's Relationship to the Tribal Culture.

Eighty-six percent of the parents felt that the schools should teach something about the tribal history and culture. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what kinds of things they had in mind. Approximately 12 percent thought that their children would be better off learning about "their" ways at home and sticking to standard "Anglo-oriented" subjects in school.

The breakdown of these ratings by schools gives us results very similar to those of Scale V-A. Parents of students in the Minneapolis schools were particularly interested in having Indian history and/or culture taught in school. Parents of students in Browning, St. Francis, and Todd County, as well as those in Cibecue also favored this quite strongly. Parents of students in Bethel, Chicago, Hoopa, Neopit, Pawnee, Ponca City and Pembroke, on the other hand, were less concerned about this than parents in other schools. Again, degree of acculturation does not fully explain these results. Most of the least acculturated parents (especially those in the Southwest) did not fall into either of the extremes on this scale, with the exception of Bethel parents, who are significantly less interested in having the school teach about the tribal culture than most parents. Those parents who seemed most concerned that their children be taught about their culture in school were in the "middle" of the acculturation continuum, with the exception of the relatively acculturated Minneapolis parents who were significantly more concerned than most parents that the schools teach about the students' native culture. Most, but not all, of the highly acculturated parents were less strongly in favor of this policy than our average parent, though even these were generally positive about the idea.

Scale V-D: Parent's Perception of the School's Actual Relationship to the Tribal Culture.

Most parents (80 percent) did not feel that the school was doing anything to help their children learn about their tribal culture or history; they believed, for the most part, that the school ignored it. Only 4 percent believed that the school consistently undermined or attacked it. Sixteen percent felt that the school made some efforts to teach about it.

There were only a few exceptions to this general opinion. Quinault parents felt that the Taholah Elementary School was doing something significant to help their children learn about Quinault tribal culture. The Taholah school does in fact provide instruction in Quinault social and cultural history, lore, and language. A Quinault teacher who grew up in Taholah, a principal who is open to

innovation, and a concerned community are the evident reasons for this policy. In contrast to the Taholah Elementary School, however, a few Taholah parents see the predominantly non-Indian junior and senior high schools which their children attend in the nearby town of Moclips as trying to undermine Quinault history and culture. Several parents in Red Wing and Shawano also felt this way.

Parents of children in St. Francis were the only other group who stood out on the high end of this scale. Many believed that St. Francis was doing something to teach their children about Sioux history and culture. Courses in anthropology, Sioux culture, and the native language were offered at this school, and many parents were clearly aware and appreciative of this.

Several other schools in our sample did offer some work relevant to the tribal culture. The Eagle Butte School, for instance, taught the "Acculturational Psychology" course developed by Dr. John Bryde for Sioux adolescents. The Tuba City High School offered a course on Indians of the Southwest. In Browning, Blackfeet history and culture courses have been offered in both the elementary and high school. Students in both BIA boarding high schools we studied--Phoenix and Chemawa--had the opportunity to take a course on Indian history and culture in their area. Elementary schools in both Angoon and Bethel were experimenting with the Alaska Reader Series developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Generally speaking, many schools with large numbers of Indian students are trying to introduce courses and/or approaches to traditional subjects which are oriented to the local Indian culture and heritage.

——Scale V-E: Parent's Attitude Concerning the Child's Learning the Tribal Language.

The relevant question for this scale was: "Should your child be taught the language of his tribe at school (in addition to English)? Why or why not? Should some subjects be taught to the students in their own language?" Sixty-eight percent of the parents responding felt that it would be "nice" or "important" for their children to learn or use the tribal language at school. Fifteen percent were indifferent to the idea, and 17 percent thought that this was a poor idea. Most of the latter group felt that learning the tribal language was useless or that it would interfere with their children learning English well. (Note: Lumbee parents, having no "native language," were not asked these questions and are not included in the totals on this scale.)

The parents who evinced the greatest interest in having their children learn or use their tribal language in school were Navajo parents whose children attended Shonto. Other parents who seemed significantly more in favor of this than the average parent in our sample were those in Angoon, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, Minneapolis, Laguna-Acoma, St. Francis, and Todd County. For the most part, these parents live in communities where the native language is still used frequently. All students in Shonto already speak their native language fluently, as do many in Laguna-Acoma and St. Francis. Some students in Cheyenne-Eagle Butte and Todd County also speak their language. Few if any students in Angoon or the Minneapolis schools speak it, however. Thus, it appears that the degree of parental interest in having the native language taught or used in school is not merely a function of the extent to which students know their native language.

The fact that Indian parents in many southwest communities, most of whose children speak their native language well, do not stand out as being unusually interested in this idea compared with other parents in our sample is interesting in this respect.

It appears to be somewhat clearer that the most acculturated parents are least enthusiastic about having the native language taught in school. Parents in Chicago, Cut Bank, Hoopa, Keshena, Pawnee, Ponca City, and Shawano were, on the whole, opposed or indifferent to this idea.* Nine of the ten parents interviewed in Fort Thomas were also opposed or indifferent to this, however, and they were not highly acculturated. Moreover, almost all of their children spoke Apache fluently.

Teachers

We first wish to consider the teachers' attitudes regarding assimilation and the goals of education. The three items on Teacher Questionnaire A which deal with this subject most directly are:

Item 36: "The Indian people should become completely assimilated with the larger American society." Teachers were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were undecided.

Items 41 and 42: Teachers were asked to indicate both their own and their school's opinion or policy with respect to Indian education. The four statements were:

1. Orient the Indian student to slowly lose identification with the Indian "ways" to assure adaptation to white "ways" of doing things.

2. Orient the Indian student to respect some Indian "ways" yet to change predominantly toward the white "ways."

3. Orient the Indian student to combine both "ways."

4. Orient the Indian student to accept some white "ways" but to remain predominantly identified with the Indian "ways."

Of our total sample of teachers (N = 635), slightly over one fourth agreed on item 36 that Indian people should become completely assimilated with the larger American society. Likewise, just over one fourth describe their educational policy as orienting students to either (1) lose their Indian "ways" and adopt white "ways," (point 1) or (2) adopt white "ways" while still learning to "respect" Indian "ways." (point 2).

*The fact that the relatively acculturated Minneapolis parents were strongly in favor of this must be kept in mind, however.

On item 36, the majority of teachers (53 percent) disagreed with the statement that Indian people should become completely assimilated. Fourteen percent of these teachers strongly disagreed. Twenty percent remained undecided. Nearly two-thirds of the teachers responding on item 41 indicated that their policy was to orient students to "combine Indian and white ways." Over 20 percent of the teachers felt that Indian students should adopt white "ways" but continue to respect their own.(point 3). A few teachers opted for the extremes--immediate and complete assimilation, or maintaining a separate Indian "identity."

It seems clear from this and from one teacher rating scale (not reported on here) that almost all teachers felt that it was most important to prepare Indian children with the knowledge and skills they will need for success in the dominant culture and society. Many teachers, however, viewed their school's current policies as oriented somewhat more toward assimilation than they would like. On item 42, 14 percent thought that the school's goal was immediate assimilation; 36 percent that the school, while not denigrating Indian ways, pushed children to adopt white ways; and 42 percent that the school tried to get children to "combine both ways."

Breaking down these results by school, it appears that teachers in Chemawa, Indian Oasis, the Minneapolis-St. Paul schools, and Taholah were most oriented toward helping to maintain some aspects of the native way of life in the lives of their student. Teachers in the Lumbee schools (Magnolia and Pembroke) and the Oklahoma schools (Pawnee and Ponca City) were least concerned about this and most in favor of assimilation. Teachers in Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, Shonto, and Browning were also fairly assimilation-oriented in comparison with teachers from other schools. Presumably, the Lumbee and Oklahoma teachers were oriented toward assimilation because the Indians in their areas were already highly acculturated. This is true to some extent of Browning. On the other hand, teachers at Shonto were probably reacting to the extreme lack of acculturation among their students. For instance, very few fifth graders at Shonto could speak English well enough to be interviewed in English; most were interviewed in Navajo. Shonto teachers may therefore have seen "maintaining Indian ways" as not becoming prepared to deal with the dominant society at all. It may also be the case in some or all of these schools that fairly conservative teachers were simply opposed to the new stress on Indian culture which has become fashionable today.

Teachers in the Minneapolis-St. Paul schools were probably reacting to the militant Indian movement there, and thus expressed negative opinions about assimilation. Teachers in Chemawa and Indian Oasis simply appear to be reacting positively toward the strong cultural heritage of their students, for no indication of unusually strong student or parent pressure for this exists. Thus, no one reason seems to account for the position which teachers take on this.

Teachers at Indian Oasis, the Browning-Cut Bank schools, and the North Carolina schools tended most strongly to see the policy of their schools as oriented to the Indian way of life. Sixty to seventy-five percent of the teachers in each of these schools believed that the school was either helping its students to "combine" Indian and white ways or orienting them to maintain their native ways while adopting some white ways. It is particularly interesting that North Carolina and Browning teachers saw their schools in this light,

while they themselves were most strongly committed to using education to prepare Indian children for the dominant society. This indicates that, given their aspirations for their students, these teachers see the schools as failing to do a good job. It is probably in this sense that they see their schools as not orienting the students to adopt white ways. On the other hand, teachers at Indian Oasis, who are quite strongly in favor of an orientation to the Papago way of life, probably see this school policy as a positive thing.

Teachers at Bethel, Tuba City-Laguna-Acoma, and the Menominee County schools (Keshena, Neopit, Shawano, and St. Joseph) saw their schools as more oriented to assimilation into the dominant society than did teachers in other schools. The difference between these teachers and teachers in the Indian Oasis, Browning-Cut Bank, and North Carolina schools is significant at the .01 level. None of these groups of teachers was above average in concern for an "Indian-oriented" school program, though all saw the school policy as less Indian-oriented than they would like.

Item 37: "There should be courses in the curriculum which teach the local Indian history and culture."

Item 39: "Courses such as mathematics, reading, English, etc. should use local cultural materials as subject matter."

Teacher agreement on the desirability of having courses on the local Indian history and culture (Item 37) was overwhelming. Forty-five percent of the teachers strongly agreed with this statement, and another 41 percent agreed. Only 5 percent disagreed. A majority of teachers (60 percent) also felt that standard courses in reading, mathematics, etc., should be based on material from the local culture, though feeling was not as strong on this as on the importance of local history and culture courses. Twenty-one percent disagreed with this second proposition, and 19 percent remained undecided.

While teachers in all schools were overwhelmingly in favor of teaching about the tribal history and culture of the native students, teachers at the Bethel, Taholah, Shonto, Indian Oasis, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Browning schools were most strongly in favor of this. Teachers at the Apache schools (Fort Thomas, Cibecue), the Menominee County schools (Keshena, Neopit, Shawano and St. Joseph), the Lumbee schools in North Carolina, and the two Oklahoma schools (Pawnee and Ponca City) were least interested in this. Nevertheless, two-thirds of the teachers in the North Carolina and Menominee County schools and one half of the teachers in the Apache schools still favored teaching about the native culture or history.

Again, the views of teachers on this item appear to correlate somewhat with the degree of acculturation of their students. Bethel, Shonto and Indian Oasis students are still quite involved in a native way of life, and this is probably why teachers think that courses in it are important. Browning students are in the middle of the acculturation continuum. With the exception of teachers in the Apache schools, the least interested teachers on this item have some of the most acculturated students. Another exception to this correlation, of course, are the Minneapolis-St. Paul teachers, who were strongly in favor of teaching about the cultures and histories of their relatively acculturated Indian students.

On item 39, Bethel teachers felt most strongly about the desirability of teaching mathematics, English and other standard subjects with materials based on the local culture. Teachers at Indian Oasis also felt strongly about the desirability of this. Teachers in the Apache, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago schools were very much in favor of this, too.

Two-thirds of the teachers in the North Carolina schools, on the other hand, were opposed to this. Teachers at Shonto and Cheyenne-Eagle Butte were quite evenly divided on the question. Compared with teachers in other schools, however, they were definitely among the least interested as far as this idea was concerned.

There seems to be even less of a correlation between teachers' opinions about this and the level of acculturation of their students than there was on item 37. Moreover, the degree of interest in having courses in the local Indian culture and history in school is not an indicator of the degree of interest in basing standard curricular materials on the local culture. Most notably, Shonto teachers were more positive than any other group of teachers on the former question but among the least positive on the second. Teachers in the Apache schools were the least positive on the first question but among the more positive on the second.

Community Leaders

Scale C: Respondent's Attitude toward Aiming the School's Program to Assist Students in Efficient Participation in Modern Society.

Nearly half (45 percent) of the community leaders (N = 152) were rated at point 4 on this scale. This point was defined on the rating scale as follows:

> 4. Respondent feels that the school should build in a positive way on the ethnic characteristics of the children, but it should also work to make them successful in the modern society. This is the "man of two cultures" position.

Eight percent were rated at point 3 on this scale, and 2 percent at points 1 and 2. The definition of point 3 specifies that the respondent feels that schools should provide Indian students with vocational training or a college-preparatory curriculum if some want either of these alternatives, but this kind of preparation should not be the major objective of the school.

Finally, 28 percent of the community leaders were rated at point 5 and 18 percent at point 6. Those rated at point 6 clearly felt that the school should prepare students for competence in the non-Indian socioeconomic system, paying no attention to the Indian society and culture. Those rated at point 5 felt that preparation for the dominant society should be the principal aim of the school, but that this should not be done in such a way as to "alienate" the Indian student from his culture. The mean score for community leaders rated on this scale was 4.51.

Scale E: Respondent's Attitude toward Teaching Tribal History and Culture in the School.

The points on this scale were defined in the same terms as the points on Parent Scale V-C ("Attitudes Concerning School's Relationship to Tribal Culture"). Forty-two percent of our sample were rated at point 5, and 30 percent at point 4. All of those rated at these 2 points believe that the schools should help Indian students learn about their tribal culture, but the individuals rated at point 5 appeared to have more definite ideas about this. In addition, 14 percent of the community leaders were rated at point 6. The definition of this point states that schools should give "daily instruction" concerning the local Indian culture and history. Only 15 percent of the sample was opposed to teaching about Indian culture in school. The mean score for the total sample was 4.45.

Our sample of community leaders tended to be rated at the high and low extremes on Scale E more than our sample of parents on the comparable Scale V-C. The distributions of ratings for these two samples are given below:

Table 1

Distributions of Ratings for Parents and Community Leaders on Scales V-C and E.

	Scale Points				
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	6	Total
Parents, Scale V-C	16	78	563	12	669
Community Leaders, Scale E	12	10	108	21	151

The difference in these distributions of ratings is significant at the .01 level using the chi-square test of significance. These results indicate that more community leaders than parents have--or are willing to state extreme opinions--either to the effect that schools should be oriented principally to the Indian culture or that schools should attempt to undermine this culture and "wean students away" from Indian communities in which they were raised. More community leaders favored the first extreme than the second.

We divided our sample of community leaders into those we knew were Indian (N = 74) and those we knew were non-Indian (N = 45). The distributions of ratings were different for each group, with the Indian leaders tending to be less in favor of a strong orientation to preparing Indian students for the non-Indian society than non-Indian leaders (Scale C) and more in favor of instruction in the Indian culture. However, neither of these differences were significant at the .05 level. The difference in the distribution of ratings on Scale C was significant at the .10 level.

Summary and Conclusions

There is a general consensus among students, parents, teachers and community leaders that some aspects of the tribal and/or Indian history and/or culture should be taught in the schools in some way.

A majority of students and parents also expressed interest in the tribal language and making it possible for children to learn or use it some in school, but interest in this was less strong than interest in the tribal culture. Moreover, substantial minorities (students: 24 percent; parents: 31 percent) were disinterested in or opposed to the school's teaching or using the tribal language--often because they felt it would interfere with learning English better.

Indian parents (as well as our field workers) in most communities agree that their respective schools are ignoring the Indian or tribal heritage.

Despite these concerns, however, there seems to be a broad consensus among teachers, students, parents and community leaders that the most important role of the schools is to prepare Indian students for employment in the dominant economy and for successful lives in the socio-cultural mainstream. This is clearly true of teachers and, from the fact that very few students and parents made major criticisms of current school programs and educational goals, this seems to be true for them as well.

As far as differences between the various schools are concerned, it is difficult to generalize about the reasons for the relative strengths of various opinions and attitudes. It does appear that students, parents, and teachers in relatively acculturated Indian communities who have considerable contact with non-Indians are less concerned about the tribal culture, except in places like Minneapolis where a strong Indian consciousness is being developed through a militant Indian movement. As far as the students, parents, and teachers in the middle and low end of the acculturation continuum are concerned, however, no general factors are identifiable. The least acculturated communities, for instance, are often not the most strongly in favor of an Indian orientation in the school program. Moreover, the fact that one group of respondents (e.g. students) is relatively strong in their feelings about having the tribal culture or language taught in school on one scale does not necessarily mean that the other categories of persons interviewed or tested (parents and teachers) are also most strongly in favor of this. It appears that, in order to explain the "strength of feeling" which students, parents and teachers have toward these questions of assimilation, acculturation, and the Indian culture, we would have to know much more about the particular circumstances--the "micro-history"--of each community than our instruments told us.